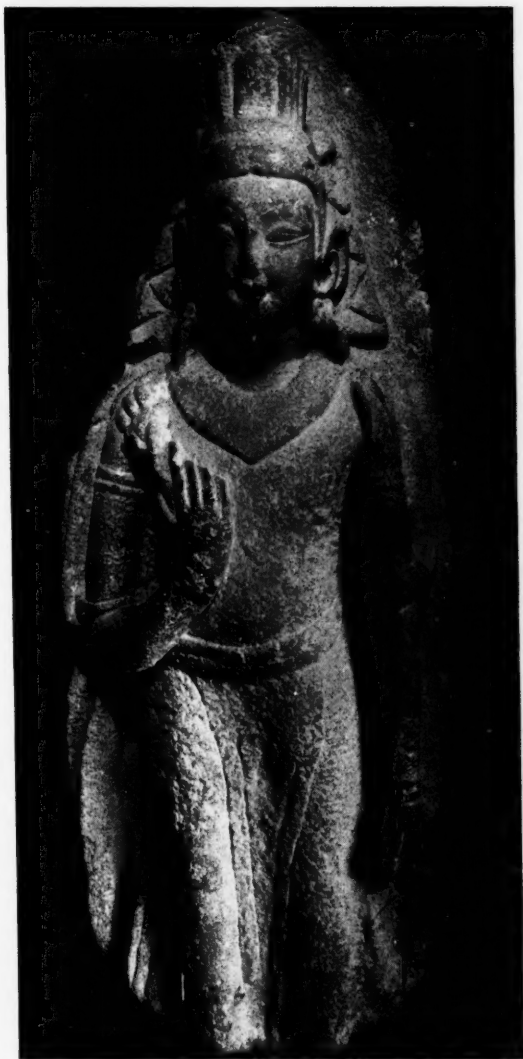


LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM
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TWO IMPORTANT MONUMENTS OF EARLY CHINESE SCULPTURE

A modest beginning in the development of the early epochs of Far Eastern Art was made a little more than a year ago, by the acquisition of a few pieces for the Museum's Oriental collection. However, ancient Chinese ritual bronzes and Buddhist sculpture were not represented.

It is therefore most gratifying that in the course of a year it was possible to open the new William Randolph Hearst Hall of Ancient Art. Nearly half the exhibits in this hall consist of Far Eastern Art. The visitor who now strolls through the Oriental galleries is able to view ancient Chinese ritual bronzes, Buddhist sculpture, gilt bronzes, paintings, pottery and porcelains.

Unfortunately, only a small fraction of the Oriental objects on display belong to the Museum's permanent collection. There are two noteworthy exceptions: one, a large standing figure of a Bodhisattva from Yün Kang (*Front Cover* and Figs. 1 and 2), a recent anonymous gift,¹ and the other, a figure of a Bodhisattva from Lung Mên, seated with ankles crossed (Fig. 4), the gift of Mr. Leo Meyer of Los Angeles.²

According to the *Wei shu*, compiled in 554 A.D., and our chief source for the history of early Buddhism in China, Buddhist images were imported from India to China as early as the 2nd century A.D.³ By the 4th century, the output of Buddhist images had increased considerably. The first of the Thousand Buddha Caves were hollowed out in the cliffs at Tun Huang, in the north-western tip of Kansu, in 366 A.D. under the direction of a Buddhist priest, named Lo-tsun.

The greatest spur to the rise of Buddhism and Buddhist art in China came with the invasion of northern China by the Wei or Toba Tartars, nomads of Tungusic stock, who originally came from Mongolia or the region of Lake Baikal, in southern Siberia. First defeating the Hsiung Nu, or Huns, people of Turki origin who had been a constant threat to China's western border, and who are identified with the same tribes who invaded Europe in the 4th century A.D., the Wei then brought about a partial unification of northern China. In 386 A.D. they established the Northern Wei Dynasty at Ta-t'ung-fu, their new capital, in Shansi. The dynasty came to an end in 534 A.D. when it was divided into Eastern and Western Wei, each

Front Cover—Bodhisattva from Yün Kang.
Northern Wei Dynasty, 5th century A.D.
Sandstone, height 59 inches.
(Anonymous Gift)

Figs. 1 (left) and 2 (opposite)—Details.



ruled by a member of the reigning Toba family. In 589 A.D. China was again united under single rule when the Duke of Sui established the Sui Dynasty (589-618) to be succeeded by the T'ang Dynasty (618-907).

The Wei had practiced Buddhism before their settlement on Chinese soil, and were familiar with its teachings. Fearing the hostility of Confucianism and Taoism, the native Chinese religions, they now adopted Buddhism as their official state religion. Shortly after their settlement at Ta-t'ung-fu, they began to hollow out the Buddhist cave-chapels at Yün Kang, approximately ten miles west of the Wei capital, in the Wu Chou Shan ridge.

Under the patronage of the Wei, Buddhism accompanied by a steadily growing output of Buddhist art assumed a position of great influence on Chinese soil. Thousands of images of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Lohans and Apsarases, contributed by humble donors who by their pious deeds hoped to attain salvation for themselves, their children and grandchildren, were carved in the sandstone walls of the Yün Kang caves in the course of the 5th century. The arduous work of hollowing out the live-rock grottoes and carving holy images was carried out by thousands of mastercraftsmen and their assistants, the former making a preliminary sketch of the general outline, the latter following up with mallet and chisel.

The rising tide of Buddhism gradually met with an increasingly hostile attitude on the part of the Taoist priesthood, who feared that their power and influence with the emperor and court would be undermined. In 446 A.D. the most far-reaching persecution of Buddhism, accompanied by wholesale destruction of Buddhist monuments, was set in motion by imperial decree. Chiefly responsible for this outburst was Ts'ui Hao, a Taoist adviser to the emperor. The *Wei shu* reports the imperial edict as follows:

"We, receiving the succession from heaven, have undergone the humiliation of the present wretched fortune. We want to sweep aside the false and establish the true, and restore the government of Fu-hsi and Shen-nung. Therefore let us destroy the foreign gods and exterminate all traces of them, in hope of not proving inferior to the Fengs.

"From this day onward, whoever presumes to worship foreign gods and make images either of clay or of bronze will be put to death with his whole household. . . . Let those in charge issue a proclamation to the generals, the armies and the governors, that all stupas, paintings and foreign sutras are to be beaten down and burned utterly; the 'sramanas' without distinction of age, are to be destroyed."

A great many of the Buddhist priests and their followers were able to save their lives by fleeing south, but incredible destruction was wrought on Buddhist art.

It is known that work on the Buddhist cave-chapels at Yün Kang was begun in the Shên Jui period (414-415 A.D.) and finished during the period of Cheng Kuang (520-524 A.D.).⁵ But it is most doubtful that any of the statues survived the Buddhist persecution of the years 446-452.

In 452, two years after the execution of Ts'ui Hao, Emperor Tai Wu Ti was assassinated. He was succeeded by Wên Ch'eng, not only a wise and benevolent ruler but also a devoted supporter of Buddhism. Under his patronage, Buddhism regained its former prestige and influence. The new emperor personally directed the hollowing out of a large number of cave-chapels at Yün Kang and the carving of Buddhist images on their walls.

In 460, according to the *Wei shu*, the priest T'an yao was appointed director general of the Yün Kang excavations by Emperor Wên Ch'eng.⁶ It must



be assumed that most of the important work at Yün Kang was carried out after 460 A.D., the year of this appointment.⁷ The activities at Yün Kang eventually culminated in the carving of five colossal Buddhas under the personal direction of T'an yao. The *Wei shu* reports that the largest of these images was over 75 feet high. Wên Ch'êng himself ordered this vast project in 454 A.D., to atone for the Buddhist persecution of the preceding years, to pray for the spiritual welfare of the five earlier Wei emperors, and to preserve and propagate the Buddhist Law.⁸ Although begun in 454 A.D., it is believed that these five monuments were completed only during the reign of Emperor Hsiao Wên Ti (471-499).⁹

The large statue of a Bodhisattva from Yün Kang (*Front Cover* and Figs. 1 and 2), now belonging to the Los Angeles County Museum, is an outstanding example of early Buddhist sculpture. It was published and analyzed by the writer in a recent issue of *The Art Quarterly*,¹⁰ and only the briefest description will be given here.

The figure is carved in the soft, brown-grey sandstone typical of the sculpture from the Yün Kang caves. The Bodhisattva carries a lotus in the right, and a flask, the lower part of which is broken off, in the left hand. A cap, falling in zig zag folds over the nape of the neck, covers the head. A crown is worn over the cap. The figure is naked to the waist, the lower body being draped in a long skirt, faintly indicated by a few incised lines. The right kneecap is clearly visible under this skirt, which is held by a girdle around the waist.

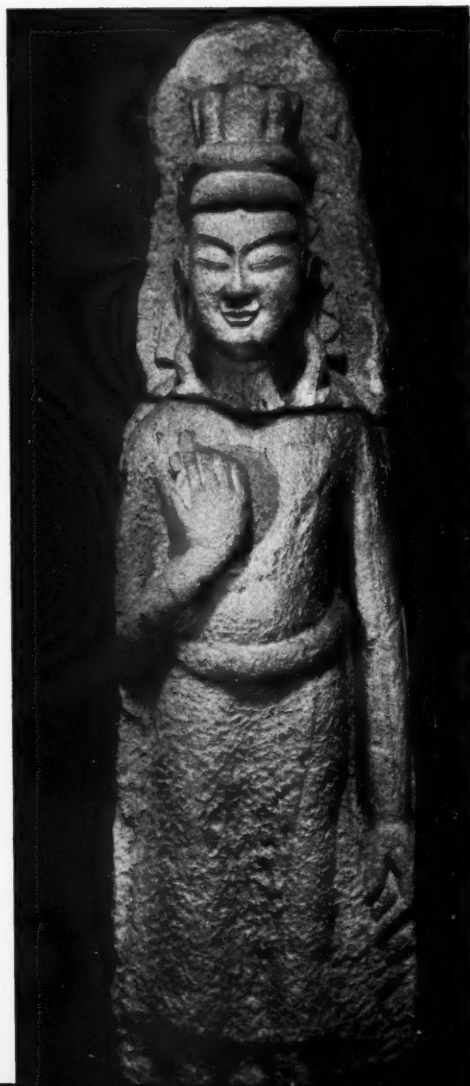
The Bodhisattva wears the cusped necklace typical of Bodhisattva statues from the Northern Wei period. The hair falls behind the ears and over the shoulders, to end in three spear-like projections on the upper arm (Fig. 2). The semicircular sections which join the ear lobes to the shoulders are presumably ear rings. Scarves flow over the back of the shoulders, falling in graceful curves to cross the forearms, and descend toward the base of the figure.

In the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, there is a statue of a Bodhisattva from Yün Kang (Fig. 3) very similar to the one in Los Angeles.¹¹ The two statues were discovered together in China. One was acquired by the late Mrs. John D. Rockefeller Jr., and later given to the Metropolitan Museum; the other is now in the permanent collection of our own Museum.

The height of the Metropolitan figure is sixty inches, or one inch more than that of the Bodhisattva in Los Angeles. Both statues are carved in the typical Yün Kang sandstone, grey-brown, soft and porous. As can readily be seen from the photographs, the two statues are, except for a few minor variations, very similar in every detail. The figure in the Metropolitan appears to have been freshened up about the face, and this accounts for slight variations in the facial types.¹² The head-dress or cap, which in both statues, falls in zig-zag folds over the nape of the neck, is seldom found in Chinese sculpture.

Each figure holds a lotus in the upraised right hand. The Bodhisattva in Los Angeles, as we have already seen, also carries a flask in the left

Fig. 3—Bodhisattva from Yün Kang, Northern Wei Dynasty, 5th century A.D. Sandstone, height 60 inches. (Metropolitan Museum of Art)



hand, and is probably a representation of Kuan Yin as Padmapani, or Lotus Bearer. It should be noted, however, that the miniature figure of Kuan Yin's spiritual father, the Buddha Amitābha, usually revealed in the crown of Kuan Yin, is not shown. The figure may therefore not necessarily represent Kuan Yin but rather one of the other Bodhisattvas of the Buddhist pantheon, perhaps Maitreya.

In the case of the Metropolitan Museum's figure, the attribution is more difficult. The Bodhisattva does not carry a flask in his left hand, but is holding what appears to be the end of a scarf or other piece of cloth. There is no small image of Amitābha in the crown. The figure may be either that of Kuan Yin or another Bodhisattva.

The two statues, if not from the same cave, must have come from the same group of caves at Yün Kang. The theory has been advanced¹³ that the statue in the Metropolitan, because of the extreme rarity of its type, is perhaps a survival from one of the caves destroyed by the Buddhist persecutions of 446-452 A.D. Should this be the case, it would also be true of the Bodhisattva in Los Angeles. But at present there is not enough evidence to prove that the two Bodhisattvas were carved during the years preceding the Buddhist persecutions, and we must therefore assume that they were made in the second half of the 5th century. However, regardless of the date of their origin, it cannot be disputed that these two statues are of the utmost importance in the history of early Chinese Buddhist sculpture.

In 494 A.D., Emperor Hsiao Wên Ti ordered that the Wei capital be moved south from Ta-t'ung-fu, in Shansi, to Lo-yang, the present Honanfu, in Honan. Most of the craftsmen and artisans who were engaged in the excavations at Yün Kang also moved south, leading to an immediate let-up of the activities at Yün Kang.

Work on the Buddhist cave-chapels at Lung Mên (dragon gate) some twelve miles south of the new Wei capital, had commenced a number of years before the transfer of the capital. Upon arrival of the imperial court at Lo-yang, thousands of workmen, most of them recent immigrants from Yün Kang, immediately set to work on the excavation of several large cave-chapels in the cliffs at Lung Mên. The aim was to raise to the glory of Sākya-muni, and the Law which he had preached, monuments which would surpass those at Yün Kang.

The persecutions of 446-452 A.D. were still remembered by many people now anxious to atone for the sins committed by their ancestors. The

Saddharmapundarika, or Lotus Sūtra, governed the iconography of the early Lung Mên caves. It taught that everything relating to Sākya-muni, in the form of Buddhist images or actual passage from the Lotus Sūtra engraved on the cave walls, would participate in the virtues pronounced in the Deer Park sermon. Enough of the Buddha's essence would be retained in such images or engraved passages, to continue his work. The Lotus Sūtra itself, whose spirit was contained in the images, would be transmitted through their presence. By the dedication of holy images, the people sought to fulfill their sacred duty, which was to spread the Buddha's teaching.

The scope of the excavations reached a high peak about 500, lasting until about 523 A.D. It is reported that "from the first year of the Ching Ming period (500 A.D.) to the sixth month, exclusively, of the fourth year of the period Chêng Kuang (523 A.D.) there had been employed 802,366 work days."¹⁴

There are three caves at Lung Mên which form a group. They are related stylistically as well as chronologically, and, as will be set forth, must be considered the earliest.¹⁵ The largest and most important cave of this group is Cave X, also known as the Ku Yang Tung. It is also the earliest, for one of the niches, according to its inscription, was begun in 483 A.D. by two hundred people, and completed in the third year of the Ching Ming period, 502 A.D. This proves, moreover, that the excavations at Lung Mên were begun some years before the transfer of the capital. Since the niche was started as early as 483, plans for the excavations of the Ku Yang Tung must have had an even earlier origin. However, work on the majority of the niches and statues was not undertaken until after establishment of the new capital in 494 A.D.

Emperor Hsiao Wên Ti died in 499 A.D. and was succeeded by Hsüan Wu Ti, who reigned until 515 A.D. The memory of the grandiose display of Buddhist sculpture at Yün Kang was still vivid in the minds of everyone, and the new emperor himself took great personal pride in erecting at Lung Mên a lasting monument to Buddhism similar to that already created in the north. Early in the Ching Ming period, about 500-503, he ordered Pai Chêng, a government official, to hollow out two cave-chapels in the Lung Mên cliffs, one to be dedicated to the late Emperor Hsiao Wên Ti, the other to his consort the Empress Dowager Wên Chao.¹⁶ In the first decade of the sixth century, shortly after 505 A.D., orders were given by an unknown court official to add a third cave to the project, dedicating it to the reigning emperor Hsüan Wu Ti.¹⁷

The Ku Yang Tung, besides being the earliest Lung Mên cave, also contains the oldest dated statue at Lung Mên. In a niche on the north wall of the cave, beside one of the statues, is an inscription explaining that the statue, an image of Maitreya, was erected by Yü-ch'ih, wife of a high government officer, for the spiritual welfare of her dead child in "the 19th year of T'ai-ho" (495 A.D.).¹⁸ Emperor Hsiao Wên Ti, to whose memory the cave was dedicated, is referred to in at least two important inscriptions accompanying dedicatory shrines. One of these inscriptions, dated 499 A.D., tells of the village master Yang Ta-yen, who, when passing the Lung Mên caves upon return from a victorious campaign, was so impressed by the great display of Buddhist statues carved during the reign of Hsiao Wên Ti, that he ordered the carving of a shrine to be dedicated to the late emperor.¹⁹ The fact that so many statues in this cave had been carved during the reign of Hsiao Wên Ti, as attested by Yang Ta-yen's visit, proves how closely the emperor was associated with the excavation and decoration of this cave. According to the other inscription, the shrine to which it refers and which contains a Śākyamuni trinity, was dedicated in 503 by the Bhikṣuñi Fa-chêng to the memory of Emperor Hsiao Wên Ti, and to Prince Pei-hai and his mother.²⁰

The style of the Bodhisattva from Lung Mên in the Los Angeles County Museum (Fig. 4) corresponds closely to that which prevailed in the Ku Yang Tung. This may readily be seen by comparison of the figure with the photographs taken inside the caves.²¹ The rock from which the Museum's figure is carved is a very hard, black limestone, typical of the Lung Mên caves, and very different from the soft porous sandstone found at Yün Kang.

The surface of the figure is coated with a hard grey-brown encrustation similar to a patina. In order to remove the figure from the grotto wall, it was necessary to chisel it off in small sections, to be reassembled later.

Because of the hard Lung Mên stone, the artists were able to carve their figures in greater detail than at Yün Kang, where the sandstone was extremely friable. Extant statues from Lung Mên are in far better condition than those from Yün Kang, owing to the very weather-resistant qualities of the limestone in comparison to the soft sandstone of Yün Kang.

The Bodhisattva in the Museum is seated with ankles crossed, and represents Maitreya, the future Buddha. A skirt covers the legs in V-shaped folds, and falls in parallel lines over the front of the throne. A cape covers the shoulders, and scarves draped over the front of the figure cross in the lap. The figure wears a cusped necklace similar to the one of the Museum's Bodhisattva from Yün Kang. A small image of a figure appears in the jeweled crown. This figure, usually associated with Avalokiteśvara, occurs often in early Lung Mên statues which, by inscription, are definitely identified as representations of the Bodhisattva Maitreya. In such instances, as also in the case of the Museum's Bodhisattva, the miniature image was perhaps to suggest the future role of the Bodhisattva, when he would descend from Tushita heaven as a Buddha and Savior of mankind. The Museum's figure is seated with the left hand on the left knee, palm facing out, the thumb, forefinger and small finger straight, the second and third finger bent. The raised right hand is held palm out, in the position known



Fig. 4—Maitreya from Lung Mên. Northern Wei Dynasty, circa 500 A.D. Black limestone, height 13¼ inches.

(Gift of Leo Meyer)

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was probably
accompanied
by two other
Bodhisattvas,
and flanked
by a seated
lion on either
side of the
throne, an
arrangement
similar to the
group of Fig. 5.²²

Since
antiquity,
great importance
was attached
to the

lion in India and the Near East. Out of fear, or admiration for the lion's irresistible power, people were inclined to associate him with the power of the king, whose traditional seat in India was the lion throne. Buddhism later adopted the lion throne as the seat of the Buddha.

In inscriptions in the three early Lung Mên caves, no Bodhisattva other than Maitreya is mentioned until 505 A.D. The cross-ankled Maitreya type disappears entirely during the Sui and T'ang periods, and is therefore characteristic of the caves from the Northern Wei Dynasty, particularly Caves X, M, and S. In these caves the cross-ankled pose was, moreover, almost exclusively reserved for Maitreya.

The common occurrence of images of Maitreya in the early grottoes proves that the iconography which guided the artists was already under the influence of Mahayana Buddhism. According to the Mahayana doctrine, the "Great Vehicle", in contrast to Hinayana, the "Small Vehicle", śākyamuni was no longer the One who through his great intellect understood the causes of mankind's endless suffering, threw off sin and entered Nirvana, thereby forever escaping from the endless cycle of death and rebirth. The Mahayana doctrine taught that śākyamuni was not the only Buddha, but merely one reincarnation in a vast series of Buddhas, extending from a boundless past into an infinite future. It was said that "the Buddhas who have been, are, and will be, are more numerous than the grains of sand on the banks of the Ganges".²³ This world, too, is not of a permanent nature, but merely one instant in the cycle of time. When this world comes to an end, Maitreya will descend from Tushita heaven, his present abode and home of the gods, and "establish the lost truths in all their purity."

But the descent of Maitreya from Tushita heaven will not come about for thousands of years, for the period between śākyamuni's death and the manifestation of Maitreya was divided as follows:

1. A period of 500 years, "the turning of the wheel of the First Law."
2. A period of 100 years, "the Law of Images."
3. A period of 3000 years, "the turning of the Wheel of the Second Law."

At the end of the last period, Maitreya will appear on earth.²⁴

Fig. 5—Maitreya: Limestone carving, north wall of Cave X, the Ku Yang Tung, Lung Mên. Northern Wei Dynasty, circa 500 A.D.

(From Tokiwa and Sekino, *Shina bukkyo shiseki*, II, pl. 96)

Taken as a whole, the sculpture on the walls of the three early Lung Mên caves must be considered as an imitation in place, time, and form of the circumstances which accompanied the preaching of the transcendental Law, as set forth in the Lotus Sūtra. The sculpture, in other words, is a visual rendering of the Lotus Sūtra itself at the moment of its revelation.

In its linear feeling, expressed through elongation of the body, sharply cut, angular features, lack of surface modeling, tensile curves formed by the nose and springing eyebrows, as though painted with a stroke of the brush, flowing, undulating lines of the scarves and drapery, the Museum's figure expresses the very best qualities of early Chinese sculpture. The lips are small and thin, but the mouth no longer expresses the archaic smile of the Yün Kang figure. However, the wedge-shaped neck is still reminiscent of the Yün Kang style. The artist, imbued with the indigenous Chinese feeling for linear rhythm and flowing lines, reveals no interest in the plastic sense of the figure, the balanced interrelationship of the individual parts, or the surface modeling, qualities which would have been of paramount interest to the Greek artist.

Stylistically, the figure is thoroughly Chinese, but pose and iconography can be traced back to Central Asia, Afghanistan and India, from where Buddhist art progressed eastward along the trade route through Central Asia, reaching Tun Huang on China's western border, then Yün Kang and Lung Mên. Examples of the cross-ankled Maitreya are known in India, Gandhāra and Central Asian art.²⁵

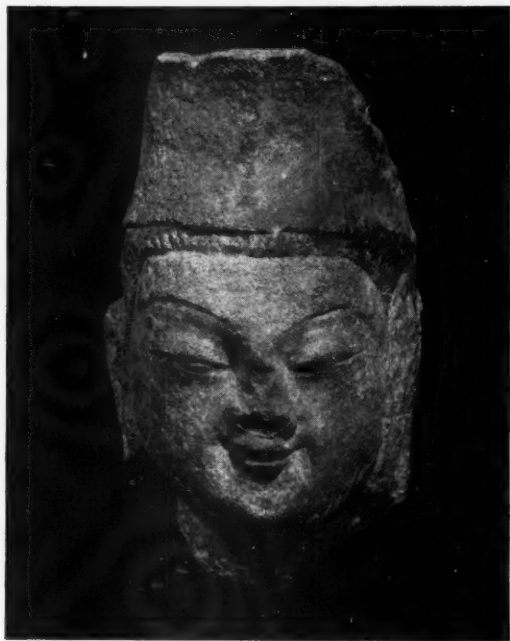
The Ku Yang Tung, the earliest of the three Lung Mên caves, X, S and M, contained the greatest number of cross-ankled Maitreya images, and it is very likely that the Museum's figure, too, came

from one of the niches in this cave. The figure in one of the shrines on the north wall of the Ku Yang Tung (Fig. 5) closely resembles the Bodhisattva in the Museum collection in style, pose, details of dress and iconography. Sekino attributes the former stylistically to the Ching Ming period (500-503 A.D.).²⁶

The greater part of the work in the Ku Yang Tung was carried out about 500 A.D., during the last years of Emperor Hsiao Wên Ti's reign, terminated by his death in 499 A.D., and the first years of Emperor Hsüan Wu Ti's reign. It is most likely that the Maitreya image in the collection of the Museum dates from this period, about 494-510 A.D.

The Los Angeles County Museum must consider itself extremely fortunate in possessing two outstanding examples of early Chinese sculpture: the large Bodhisattva from Yün Kang and the cross-ankled Maitreya from Lung Mên.

The Oriental galleries of the Museum are further enriched by additional loan material of sculpture from Yün Kang:



I. A bearded head, wearing a cap, and with much of the original pigment still preserved (Fig. 6). It comes from Cave 1 (Tokiwa and Sekino) at Yün Kang. Fig. 7 shows the entire statue, in its original position at Yün Kang, as photographed by Siren.²⁷

II. A figure of a kneeling, adoring Bodhisattva (Fig. 8). It probably comes from the group of adoring Bodhisattvas in the arch above the Buddha in Cave 2 (Tokiwa and Sekino). The left half of this arch is reproduced in Fig. 9.²⁸ One may assume that the Bodhisattva comes from the corresponding right half of the arch.



NOTES

¹Accession number A.5776.48-1—height, 59 inches.

²Accession number A.5809.48-1—height, 13¼ inches.

³Rowland, Benjamin Jr.—*Notes on the Dated Statues of the Northern Wei Dynasty and the Beginnings of Buddhist Sculpture in China*, in *The Art Bulletin*, March 1937, p.93.

⁴*Wei shu*, translated by J. Ware in *T'oung Pao* (Paris, 1933), pp.141-142.

⁵Chavannes, Edouard—*Mission Archéologique dans la Chine Septentrionale*, I, part 2, p.299, quoting from the *Shansi t'ung chih*, "Les travaux commencèrent pendant la période chên-jouie (414-415) et furent terminés pendant la période tchéng-kouang (520-524)."

⁶Tokiwa, D. and Sekino, T.—*Shina bukkyo shiseki* (Tokyo, 1930), II, p.14.

⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

⁸*Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁹Rowland, *op. cit.* 3, p.102.

¹⁰Trubner, Henry—*Statue of a Bodhisattva from Yün Kang*, in *The Art Quarterly* (Detroit Institute of Arts), Spring 1948, pp.92-105.

¹¹Priest, Alan—*Chinese Sculpture in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, pl. XVII.

¹²*Ibid.* p.23, no.8.

¹³*Ibid.*

¹⁴*Wei shu*, p.166.

¹⁵Chavannes lists them as X, S and M. Sirén and Sekino have numbered them 21, 17 and 13 respectively. Chavannes' system has been chosen for this article.

¹⁶*Wei shu*, pp.165-166. Cave X(21) is the one dedicated to the deceased Emperor Hsiao Wên Ti, cave S(17) that dedicated to his consort.

¹⁷Cave M(13).

¹⁸Tokiwa and Sekino, *op. cit.* 6, p.95.

¹⁹*Ibid.*, p. 94.

²⁰*Ibid.*

²¹Cf. Chavannes, *op. cit.* 5, VI; Tokiwa and Sekino, *op. cit.* 6, plates 89, 91-97. See also Sirén, Oswald—*Chinese Sculpture from the Fifth to the Fourteenth Century* (London, 1925), II, plates 77-81.

²²Tokiwa and Sekino, *op. cit.* 6, plate 96.

²³Getty, A.—*The Gods of Northern Buddhism* (Oxford, 1914), p.9.

²⁴*Ibid.*

²⁵Cf. the caves at Ajanta, Bamiyan and Kyzil.

²⁶Tokiwa and Sekino, *op. cit.* 6, p.97.

²⁷Sirén, *op. cit.* 21, plate 21 A.

²⁸Tokiwa and Sekino, *op. cit.* 6, plate 22(2).

These last two monuments, as well as other Buddhist sculpture in the Los Angeles County Museum, will be fully discussed in a forthcoming issue.

—HENRY TRUBNER

Fig. 6 (opposite page)—Bearded head, sandstone, from Cave I at Yün Kang, Northern Wei Dynasty, second half of the 5th century A.D.

(Loan, Los Angeles County Museum)

Fig. 7 (above)—Carvings, interior of Cave I at Yün Kang, showing in situ the bearded head of Fig. 6.

(From Oswald Sirén, *History of Chinese Sculpture*, II, 21.A)

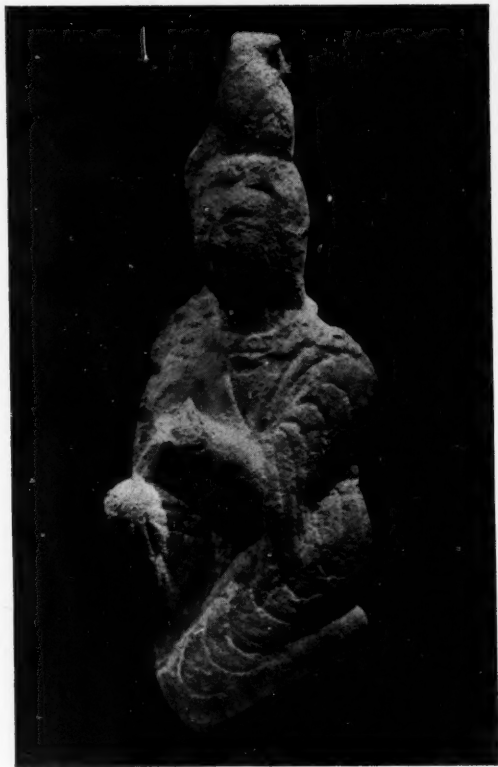


Fig. 8 (right)—Adoring Bodhisattva, from Yün Kang. Sandstone figure, presumably from the arch above the Buddha in Cave 2 (see Fig. 9). Northern Wei Dynasty, second half of the 5th century A.D.

(Loan, Los Angeles County Museum)

Fig. 9 (above)—Detail in Cave 2 at Yün Kang, showing figures in left half of archway above the Buddha. Northern Wei Dynasty, second half of the 5th century A.D.

(From Tokiwa and Sekino, *Shina bukkyo shiseki*, II, pl. 22-2)



A PORTRAIT OF S. BERNARDINO OF SIENA

The name of our California city, San Bernardino, is derived from Saint Bernardino of Siena (1380-1444), the great mystic and orator of the 15th century. By a fortunate coincidence, the Museum has acquired a contemporary portrait of the saint as a gift from Dr. Rudolph Heinemann of New York.¹

S. Bernardino is seen life-size and full-length (Fig. 1), standing in a desert landscape where only a few plants grow between rocks and low shrubbery. He wears the gray habit of the Franciscans, with high wooden sandals on his broad, bare feet. In his right hand he holds the Bible, in his left an emblem with the monogram of Christ which, in this form, was his own invention. S. Bernardino's name is inscribed across the panel.

S. Bernardino was born of a noble family, the Albizzecci, but nothing disturbed him more than the endless strife among the different factions of the nobility, who prided themselves on having their coats-of-arms painted on the front of their houses. The saint recommended his followers to replace these arms with the symbols of Christ, represented either on a disc or square; and on many houses in Siena and other cities where his teachings were accepted, one may still find today his monogram of Christ next to the arms of the noble family. In contemporary paintings of his native city by Neroccio, and especially by Sano di Pietro, *S. Bernardino Preaching* (Fig. 2), he is shown holding the emblem which he devised. The white mitres, so decoratively placed against the dark blue background of our panel, recall his refusal of the bishoprics of three cities, Siena among them, which were offered him by the Pope. Rather than orate in the Latin of the church and clergy, S. Bernardino chose to continue his freedom of speech in the use of the people's vulgar Italian.

The application of gilded stucco to the low Gothic arch, its columns and ornamentation, implies the North Italian origin of the painting, while the type of design of the figure seems related to Paduan artists of the school of Mantegna and Carlo Crivelli. The work has been attributed to Dario di Gio-

vanni,² an interesting artist of whom we have more documents than paintings. He was the pupil and collaborator of that strange Paduan master, Francesco Squarcione, who has a considerable reputation as teacher, but seems to have been creative only through the help of such excellent pupils as Mantegna and Crivelli, whom he discovered and engaged. Dario was one of them. Born in 1420, he became a pupil of Squarcione in Padua in 1440 (according to their two-year contract) and is mentioned as still in partnership with him six years later. Thereafter he worked in smaller towns, Treviso, Asolo, Bassano and Conegliano, where he died in 1498. That his reputation was established in his lifetime is proved by the fact that in 1456 he was asked by the Signoria of Venice to execute some works there, which are not preserved, and that he painted a portrait of Caterina Cornaro, probably in 1468 when this famous, wealthy Queen of Cyprus was fourteen or fifteen years of age.

Dario di Giovanni must have heard S. Bernardino and been deeply impressed by his sermons to the cultivated audiences of Padua, which numbered among them professors of the famed university. This was about 1442-43, in the period when Dario worked with Squarcione. The portrait of S. Bernardino suggests that it was painted from life or at least from a good recollection of the subject, and executed probably not much earlier than 1450-60. S. Bernardino died in 1444 and was canonized in 1450. The presence of the nimbus suggests the painting was done after this event, although in several of his portraits executed in Siena before his death he is shown with head encircled by the rays conferred on the blessed before canonization.

The present portrait does not have quite the emaciated features found in the work of Sienese contemporaries. It also has little of the lyrical and mystical traits which are perhaps more characteristic of the painters of Siena than of the model who, in this case, is a keenly observant, energetic and intelligent person. Although ranked with the great mystics of Siena, S. Bernardino was primarily a man of action rather than a contemplative. He entered the Franciscan order when he was twenty-two (1402) soon after the pestilence had devastated Siena. Filled with compassion for his fellow citizens, he worked fearlessly for months in the overcrowded hospital where most of his co-workers died of contagion, until he himself was near exhaustion.

¹Accession number A.5854.48-1—size 32 by 71 inches.

²By O. Sirén in the catalogue of Italian paintings in the Kleinberger Galleries, 1917, No. 92.

Fig. 1—"S. Bernardino" by Dario di Giovanni
(1420-1498).
(Gift of Dr. Rudolph Heinemann)



He early showed his remarkable gifts as an orator, and after preaching his first sermon in Siena at the age of twenty-five, he travelled through many cities in northern and central Italy as far as Rome, directing his exhortations against the leaders of political parties who, by inflaming the masses to hatred and strife, had created chaotic conditions everywhere during the time of the schism. In common with the other reformers of his period, he attacked usurers, gamblers, and those among the wealthy, especially women, who wasted their money for luxury and objects of vanity. After his speeches which usually lasted three or four hours, it frequently transpired that stakes were erected where women burned their gowns, jewels, high heeled slippers, mirrors and other appurtenances of the toilette. But Bernardino was not a preacher of class hatred like Savonarola, who infuriated the mob to violence. While condemning political passion and improper behavior, he tried to unite the opposing parties and to create peace through mutual understanding, and by stressing human relationships. His narrational gift and—a trait rare among saints—his gift of humor helped to keep his audiences spellbound. We are fortunately able to know the contents and style of his sermons, as one of his admirers, a Sieneese clothmaker, took down some of his most important deliveries verbatim in 1427. They afford a vivid insight into the culture of the time and of S. Bernardino's strange and strong personality. To give an idea of his conception of life, we quote a few paragraphs in which he explains why an ascetic life in the desert seemed to him unnecessary, although he favored simple living and refused to have anything to do with money matters:

One day there came to me the idea that I should live on herbs and water, and in order to do this I thought that I had better go and take up my abode in a wood. . . I gathered some sow-

thistles and other nasty herbs, with which to make a salad. Such a salad! There was neither salt nor oil nor bread! However, I reasoned with myself. "Now let us start this new life by washing and scraping the salad this first time, and another time we shall not wash it, but simply scrape it, and when we are accustomed to it we shall not scrape it, so that by degrees we shall arrive at such a point that we shall not even gather it. . . ." So, in the Name of the Blessed Lord I started on my first mouthful and began to chew, *but it would not go down*, it remained solid in my mouth, and I said to myself: "Well, well, let us begin to drink a little water to help it." Down ran the water as if in a hurry to pass the salad, which still remained a fixture! I took gulp after gulp of water and yet that one mouthful of salad remained unswallowed!

Shall I tell you something? One mouthful of sow-thistle took away from me every temptation to lead that kind of life, and certainly I do believe that it was a temptation, because that which followed was election and not temptation.

How careful we should be to weigh well our desires, for some lead to evil and some to good.

In keeping with all mediæval portraits—and in conception and spirit our painting is still akin to the last Gothic phase of mediæval art—the portrait of S. Bernardino has little of the individual, realistic character of the Renaissance and later epochs. It is a typical expression of the ideas of the period, which were those of the ever powerful church. The habit of S. Bernardino characterizes him as a servant of the church, the surrounding symbols, mitres, Bible, nimbus and sacred monogram signify the religion which he represents, and he stands within the very protection of the church as shown by the Gothic arch over him. Yet we feel, at the same time, the individual personality of

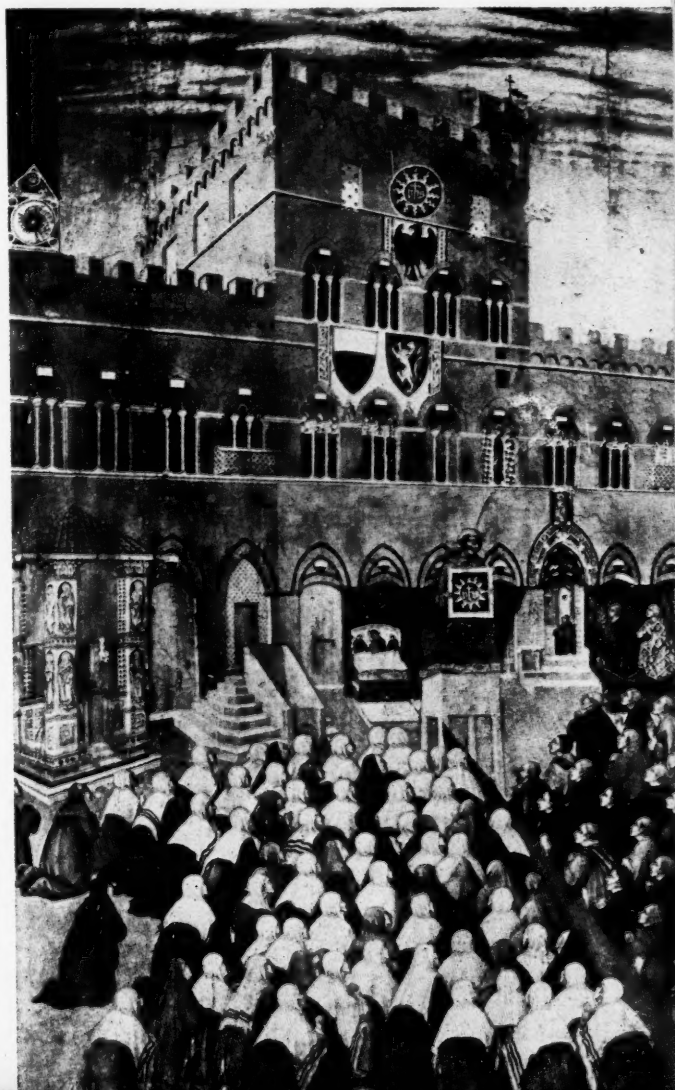
modern times behind that modest servant of a spiritual and worldly power, in his sharp and penetrating features, his compressed lips, firm chin, and above all, in the sidelong glance of his twinkling and cheerful eyes.

—W. R. VALENTINER

Literature: P. Miscatelli, *The Mystics of Siena* (Cambridge, 1929); C. von Chledowski, *Siena* (Berlin, 1923); O. Sirén, *Exhibition of Italian Primitives* (Kleinberger Galleries, New York, 1917); D. v. Hadeln, *Dario di Giovanni*; Thieme-Becker, *Kunstler Lexicon*, Vol. VIII.

Fig. 2—"S. Bernardino Preaching," circa 1444 by Sano di Pietro (1406-1481).

(Chapter-room, Cathedral of Siena)



THE SUBJECT OF THE MAIOLICA "BACILE"

An unusual instance of an early Renaissance revival of an early Christian work is revealed in the uncovering of the correct interpretation of the subject matter represented on the maiolica *bacile*, acquired by the Museum through the Hearst Foundation Fund in the winter of 1946.¹ First taken for a scene of Orpheus lamenting the loss of Eurydice, the painting is now recognized as a representation, not of a classical theme, but a Biblical one: Adam in the earthly paradise, naming the animals in Eden.

The source for this reinterpretation lies in the Carrand diptych in the Bargello, Florence, a beautiful carved work of the 5th century, representative of the late flowering of Latin art before it was superseded by the development of the Byzantine. The Carrand diptych consists of a leaf with scenes from the life of S. Paul and a leaf of the earthly paradise of Adam. A comparison of this latter carving with the painting of our *bacile* establishes the identity of the subject matter.

In the dish (Fig. 1) the artist obviously copied, or adopted the material of, the ivory leaf (Fig. 2)

¹Fully discussed by Victor Merlo in the Spring 1947 issue of the *Bulletin of the Art Division*—"An Early Italian Maiolica," pp.19-26

with changes that necessarily ensued when his sketch or drawing was reversed in transfer to the vessel, and the composition was re-arranged in circular centralization. Otherwise, the subject is identically depicted: the nude Adam seated among the birds and animals of Paradise, clasping a branch, his legs disposed in substantially the same position. The number of animals and birds coincide in both cases, with only the presence of a snake, and what appears to be possibly a lizard, adding to the variety of wild life shown on the diptych. Complete fidelity to the original was observed as can be seen in all details, from Adam's figure to the serpentine arrangement of the tails of the lion and lioness on the left of both works, which are too alike to be mere accident. Aside from a few minor changes, the only variations in the *bacile* are the freer treatment of Adam's hair, in the style of the day, as compared to his tightly curled coiffure in the diptych, and the greater delicacy of his hands.

The recognition of the true subject of our basin and its connection with the Bargello carving open up some interesting considerations concerning the transmutation of Classical into Christian art. The reason for the former interpretation of the *bacile's* subject as that of Orpheus is easily understood, in the light of the obvious derivation of the Adam scene from the traditional representation of the Thracian musician and poet.² This was generally characterized by the presence of birds and beasts whom Orpheus charmed with his song, and/or by the presence of the drooping bough of a willow tree, which he clasped, the bough serving him as a passport when he descended into the nether world to rescue the dead Eurydice.³ The persistence of this iconography in the

²The young Hercules was sometimes represented as totally nude, and in position not unlike the Adam on our dish. Cf. *Themis*, Jane Harrison, Cambridge, 1927, p. 367, fig. 98.

³Orpheus is shown beneath the willow, grasping the bough, in the frescoes of Polygnotus, in a loggia at Delphi.

Fig. 1—Maiolica *bacile*, "Adam in the Earthly Paradise." Florentine, 15th century.

(The Hearst Foundation Fund)



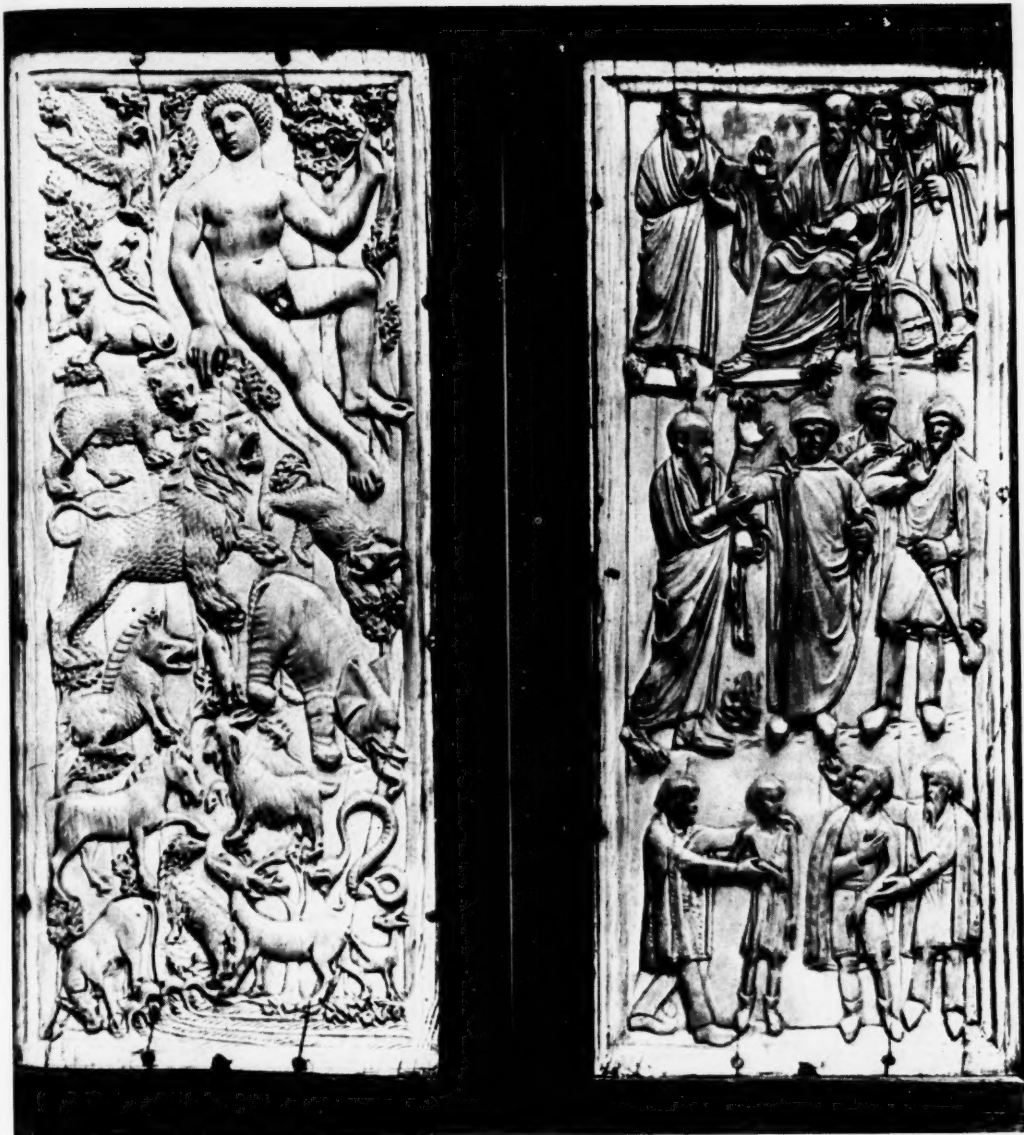


Fig. 2—Carved ivory diptych, "Adam in the Earthly Paradise," and "Scenes from the Life of S. Paul," Italian, 5th century.

(The Bargello, Florence)

Adam scene was largely responsible for the confoundment of the themes, although the absence of the lyre, without which Orpheus would scarcely ever be represented, must have suggested an unusual modification.

But behind the formal relationship, a more pertinent connection existed between the Biblical and

Greek-Orphic spirit which allowed for the representation of one of the heroes in the form of the

other. The religion based upon Orpheus was distinguished from the unmixed Greek religion by a greater emphasis upon heaven and Orpheus, associated with ideas of death and after-life, was himself later regarded as a type or variant of Christ. Thus, to pictorialize the Old Testament figure, the father of man, in the manner of the mythic Greek singer was not an unbridgeable step, and accomplished in this instance merely by stripping Adam of the dress and lyre of Orpheus. Either for purposes of disguise or to present the new religion in familiar forms, Christian art utilized Classical art,⁴ —not only, for instance, to allow Christ to be worshipped in the form of Orpheus,⁵ as a substitute for the Good Shepherd, but because it could not forego the interest in classical subjects, as evidenced by the Carrand diptych, one of the many official and non-official ivory works of the Consular diptych period (fourth to sixth century) which adopted the neo-classical style.

But the most striking feature of our *bacile* painting is its closeness to the antecedental work, separated from it by a thousand years. For the famed Renaissance in Italy was largely a renaissance of the antique (that is, of Greek, Roman, and even in some

cases, of Etruscan works) whereas our dish discloses a Florentine artist of the early 15th century copying a work that belongs to the 5th century Renaissance of the antique, itself inspired by a classical piece, thus making the maiolica painting twice removed from the original prototype. Its closeness to the Bargello leaf, however is unquestionable, from the stylization of the animals⁶ to the representation of the Four Rivers⁷ at the bottom of the dish—indeed the Rivers are perspectively more outraged on the Renaissance work than on that of the 5th century—and shows one of the most pointed imitations that exists in the history of such revivals of art motifs. The earlier piece is more naturalistic, i.e., convincing, in the varied disposition of the beasts which, in the *bacile*, are arranged strictly in the interest of decorativeness and lack, for example, the force of the large lion on the left of the diptych. When we recall that Pisanello (1397-c.1456) whose activity was earlier than, if not contemporaneous with, the artist of the maiolica dish, drew animals and birds with almost the scientific detail found in Audubon and other naturalists, the archaic stylization in our *bacile* can be read only as a direct copy of the 5th century ivory leaf, an example of the first revival of antique art surviving in a unique work almost a millennium later.

—EBRIA FEINBLATT

⁴The possibility that early Christianity adopted Greek or pagan types because the meanings in them were of no significance or interest to it, implies an attitude of indifference to the forms in which it put its religious art, which is hard to accept.

⁵Another derivative from the Orphic prototype is the Carolingian Paris Psalter, in which David is shown sitting on a knoll, playing a lyre, with several animals at his feet, including the ubiquitous goat who is not far removed in type from the ones in both the Bargello leaf and the maiolica dish.

⁶Here more *passant* in the heraldic sense than so represented in the ivory.

⁷Pison, Gihon, Hiddekel, and Euphrates. They were divided from the original river of Eden and believed to water, respectively, Havilah, Ethiopia, Assyria, and Persia.

"CHRIST IN LIMBO" BY ALONSO CANO

To our small collection of Spanish paintings—of such significance to this part of the country where the Spanish tradition still exists—there has recently been added, through the generosity of Miss Bella Mabury, an excellent work¹ by Alonso Cano (1601-1667), the contemporary and friend of Velasquez.

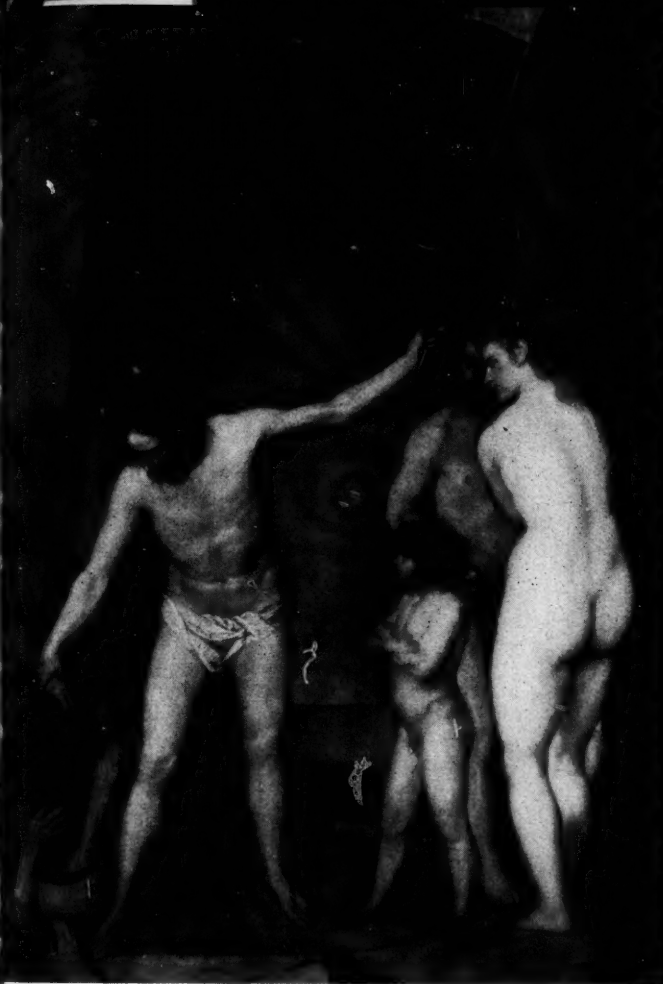
Alonso Cano was the most many-sided of the Spanish masters of the great epoch; he was famous

as sculptor and architect, as well as painter. He is perhaps best known as a sculptor, although his

¹Accession number L.2100.48-14—a gift to the Museum Associates. The painting, measuring 66 by 47 inches, is signed with the well-known monogram of the artist in the lower right hand corner. It was exhibited in the National Loan Exhibit (1909-10), London, in aid of the National Gallery Fund, from the collection of Charles Labor.

Fig. 1—"Christ in Limbo" by Alonso Cano (1601-1667).

(Gift of Miss Bella Mabury)



Still, knowing that Cano was a great sculptor, we can easily recognize certain sculptural ideas in the composition which especially appeal to our modern taste. The two groups in the painting, that at the left around Christ and that at the right around Eve, are admirably held together by a strong sense for compact volume. They are further contrasted to one another, the closed form of the three figures at the right to the open form of the four figures at the left. Christ, his arms and limbs extending to all sides, leans over and outward in a convex movement, Eve, her limbs closely packed around her body, inclines inward to the space, both figures thus creating the idea of volume and of a forward and backward movement, such as a sculptor, rather than a painter, would strive for. The artist knew Italian *contraposto*. The movement of Christ's feet is repeated in those of the nude child, while Eve steps with her right foot into the painting, making a counter motion to Christ. The big diagonal lines traversing the canvas from top to bottom add an exciting tempo to the action of the figures, the light flag held aloft by Christ being effectively counterbalanced by the heavy cross whose

horizontal beam juts toward the barred window—obviously not without symbolism, as the devil in the shape of a flame-expelling dragon tries to penetrate the resurjective scene.

paintings have a considerable popular appeal where they are exhibited in such leading European galleries as the Prado, the Louvre, the National Gallery in London, the Berlin, Dresden and Munich Galleries, and especially in the churches of Madrid and Granada. Yet, if we did not know that he was a sculptor, we would scarcely suspect it from the decided pictorial qualities in the present painting (Fig. 1). The wide space around the figures with its reddish, glowing atmosphere, the fine chiaroscuro which gives them relief, the delicate, warm tones breaking forth with fiery radiance from the little window above, the thin, easy touch of execution, all indicate a master of painting. The shimmering surface treatment of the nude female figure to the right reminds us of Titian.

The subject, frequently represented in mediæval times, is not Biblical, but taken from the apocryphal *Gospel of Nicodemus*, or *Acts of Pontius Pilate*, which dates back to the 2nd or 3rd century A.D., and was a great source for the mystery plays and poems of the Middle Ages. According to the story, Christ descended into hell between the time of his crucifixion and resurrection, to bring salvation to souls held captive there since the beginning of time. He resurrects Adam and Eve with their child (Cain or Abel), John the Baptist, and prophets from the Old Testament who in mediæval times were usually represented as David and Solomon. Reads the *Gos-*



Fig. 2—"Christ in Limbo" by Albrecht Dürer (1471-1528). From the Engraved Passion.

(Private collection, Los Angeles)

pel of Nicodemus: "Then there was a great voice, as of a sound of thunder, saying, Lift up your Gates, ye Princes, and be ye lifted up ye Gates of Hell, that the King of Glory may enter . . . And the mighty Lord appeared in the form of a man, and enlightened those places which had ever been before in darkness. . . Then he stretched forth his hand and said, Come to me, all ye my Saints, who were created in my image, but who were condemned by the tree of the forbidden fruit, and by the devil and death . . . Then the Lord Jesus laid hold on Adam's hand, and said to him, Peace be to thee, and to all thy righteous prosperity, which is mine. And he made the sign of the cross upon Adam, and holding him by the right hand, he ascended from hell, and all the Saints of God followed him."

This Act of Atonement was called by the Byzantine the *Anastasis*, or Harrowing of Hell,² harrowing used in the sense of plundering.

Alonso Cano was known as a temperamental and difficult person. His frequent changes of residence were occasioned by his difficulty in getting along with people. Born in 1601 in Granada, the city which claims him as its greatest artist, he studied in Seville with the master of Murillo, Juan de Castillo, who recognized his extraordinary talent. Soon successful with his independent work as sculptor and decorator in Seville, he was forced to quit the city as the result of a duel with another artist whom he severely wounded.

Cano went to Madrid where he found protection in the tyrannical but art loving minister of Philip IV, the Duke Olivarez. He was also welcomed by Velasquez, whom he had already met in his early days in Seville. The king made Cano drawing master to his son, Balthazar Carlos, but this position was soon cut short after Cano quarrelled with his proud little pupil. In 1644, Cano had to leave Madrid when accused—probably unjustly—of the murder of his wife, whose corpse was discovered in their house. But Philip IV, detecting his great artistic abilities, recalled him in 1649 to assist in the triumphal arch for the entry of Queen Marianna of Austria. Again the artist's residence was not of long duration. He longed to retire in some quiet place far from the noisy capital, and besought the king for the position of Racionero in the cathedral of his native Granada. He was unmindful of the fact that he knew no Latin and less of the theology necessary to pass the examination for the appointment. The king recommended him and Cano got the post, the examination being postponed pending his mastering the requirements! The artist, however, continuing in a state of ignorance concerning Latin, not due to laziness since he was actively engaged in painting altarpieces for the church as well as filling other commissions, a scandal ensued, and on S. Luke's day Cano was literally thrown out from the cathedral where he had been working. He thereupon prepared a long written defense to the king and embarked on a trip to Madrid, demanding that his expense be borne by the chapter of the cathedral. The controversy with the chapter of Granada went on for years and Cano would have lost had not the king intervened again and again for him, at length compelling the cathedral to reinstate him. He died in poor circumstances in Granada in 1667.

²C. R. Morey, *Mediaeval Art*, New York, 1942, p. 143.

Our painting belongs to the artist's later period. How he developed a solid, sculptural style to a fluid, pictorial one can be seen by comparing an early work like *S. Agnes*, in the Berlin Museum (now on tour in the United States with the German paintings), which is reminiscent of Zurbaran, with the *Christ in Limbo* whose execution is related to Velasquez' later style. The composition of *Christ in Limbo* appears derived from Dürer's engraving of the same subject (Fig. 2) in his Engraved Passion series of 1513. Cano was very fond of Dürer's work, although he only knew it from reproductions, and made use more than once of his compositions. Cano had many enemies and was often accused of borrowing motives from other artists, a charge which many art historians still hold against him today; but this is unjust, since in this respect he did not differ from other outstanding masters who, while following tradition, created something so new and original that we quite forget its connection with the past. He used to answer his critics as follows: "One who makes something new out of the old is doing very well indeed."

A comparison between Cano's version of the subject and Dürer's shows that the Spaniard stressed

the contrast between Christ's spiritual power and Eve's physical beauty much more than the German. This may appear strange in a work of such religious character and in a period of extreme devoutness, if not fanaticism, among Spanish artists. It should be recalled, however, that religious fervor and sensuousness were in no way contradictory from the standpoint of the Baroque, and that the Spanish monarchs, despite their rigorous religious character, were quite able to appreciate the voluptuous female beauties of Titian and his contemporaries and of Rubens. Cano must have become aware of this when, as his first task for Philip IV, he undertook the restoration of paintings by Titian and Rubens which had suffered from the fire in the Royal Palace of 1640.

—W. R. VALENTINER

Literature: Sir William Stirling Maxwell, *Annals of the Artists of Spain*, 1891, Vol. III; A. L. Mayer, in *Jahrbuch d. Kgl. Preuss. Kunstsammlungen*, 1910, and *Geschichte d. Spanischen Malerei*, Leipzig, 1922; Thieme-Becker, *Künstler-Lexicon*, Vol. V.

BLAKE'S ILLUSTRATIONS OF "THE BOOK OF JOB"

It is in the way of being a double anomaly that William Blake produced his illustrations of the *Book of Job* in the early 19th century; an anomaly because up to then England had contributed less in the field of engraving than any country in Europe with the exception of Spain,¹ and because the era of great religious art was already over by the end of the 17th century. Yet Blake (1757-1827) be-

came English engraving's most individual star, ranked for originality with Dürer, and he created in a Puritanical and sentimental epoch an art which was genuinely inspired and uncompromisingly unworldly.

This accomplishment is the more remarkable when we consider the period in which he worked. It was the time of romantic supernaturalism in Europe, when the excessive sensibility of the latter 18th century, with its roots in Rousseau and Goethe's *Sorrows of Werther*, was wedded to Ger-

¹Spain produced her first great graphic artist, Goya (1746-1828) contemporaneously with Blake.



Fig. 1—Henry Fuseli (1741-1825): "The Nightmare" (First Version, circa 1781-2).

(Collection of Professor P. Ganz, Oberhofen, Switzerland)

man transcendentalism which in turn influenced the art and literature of the day. In the realm of fervid terror, exaggerated feeling, mysterious Byronic gloom and general theatricality, all were affected, and no one more typified the curious effects of a century in which science and magic were still occultly confounded than the macabre artist, Henry Fuseli, who influenced Blake's art as Swedenborg, Boehme, the Kabala, and Milton, influenced his thought and imagination.

The present *Job* series, first conceived as a set of watercolors, was commissioned in 1823, and engraved by Blake two years later, two years before his death, and in the very year in which Fuseli died. This Swiss-born romantic, whose real name was Johann Heinrich Füssli, had lived to eighty-four, a fantastic figure who transplanted himself

from his native soil to leaven that of a foreign country. Long relegated to the limbo of eccentrics in art, Fuseli has only recently been rediscovered with two exhibitions of his work this year, one at the Orangerie in Paris, the other in London. The French now hail him as one of the greatest and most astonishing of Swiss artists, a forgotten precursor of surrealism and fantastic art.

The boneless, conquered passivity of the swooning sleeper in Fuseli's most famous picture, of which there are two versions, *The Nightmare* (Fig. 1 and 2) was an influence upon Blake as early as 1795 when he illustrated with a vaporous troupe of flowing, floating and flying figures the melancholy *Night Thoughts* of the poet, Edward Young. It was still echoed a quarter of a century later in the third plate of the *Job* engravings, "Thy Sons & thy Daughters were eating & drinking Wine," etc. (Fig. 3), in the supine woman at the bottom and the falling figures at the right.

And in the tenth *Job* engraving, "The Just Upright Man is laughed to scorn." (Fig. 4), the gestures of the accusing are definitely drawn from another Fuseli painting, the *Three Witches*, done as an illustration of *Macbeth*. Despite the rendering of musculature in his nudes, the influence of Michelangelo, there is nevertheless in Blake's draped figures much of the sylph-like fluidity and spectral bodilessness found in Fuseli when it does not in Blake approach the monumental outlined simplicity of Giotto. But what stemmed from the weird and startling in Fuseli and was allied to the mystery and terror writers of his day, arose for Blake not in the realm of the supernatural but the spiritual, and enabled him to interpret the story of Job with a feeling of elemental simplicity whose vitality has persisted to our time, influencing such divers personalities as Orozco, Rockwell Kent, and that late Syrian popularizer of Eastern thought, Kahlil Gibran. That Blake sustained his own dream-world unaffected by the more ghostly and theatrical currents of the age is a testimonial to his singular purity of vision and, despite his transcendentalism, typical British hard-headedness, a sample of which is conveyed by his caustic sayings, notably from his epigrams on artists:

Rafael, Sublime, Majestic, Graceful, Wise—
His Executive Power must I despise?
Rubens, Low, Vulgar, Stupid, Ignorant—
His power of Execution must I grant?²

All pictures that's painted with sense and with
thought

Are painted by Madmen, as sure as a Groat;
For the greater the Fool is the Pencil more
blest,

As when they are drunk they always paint best.
They can never Rafael it, Fuseli, nor Blake it;
If they can't see an outline, pray how can they
make it?

When Men will draw outlines begin you to
jaw them:

Madmen see outlines and therefore they draw
them!³

All his life Blake opposed mass and color by line; as for Ingres and Dali, drawing was "the probity of art" for him, and as Raphael personified this perfection of line above all, so Rubens stood for the breakup of order and truth, which lay in line for Blake, by his Baroque energy of movement and light in which the swelling mass and color engulfed and obscured the restraining outline, creating a world of surging plasticity and sensuousness. Blake wrote, "He who does not imagine in stronger and better lineaments and in stronger and better light than his perishing and mortal eye can see, does not imagine at all . . ." "Blots and blurs, the impressionistic technique, in short, were anathema to him.

The illustrations to the *Book of Job*, recently acquired by the Museum through the generosity of Miss Bella Mabury, comprise twenty-one engravings and title-page, published by Blake himself on March 8, 1825.⁴ The series are generally held to be his supreme achievement in line engraving, revealing a unity and power commensurate with the

great poetry which they serve to pictorialize. Blake called them not illustrations or engravings, but "inventions." Laurence Binyon, in his study of Blake, supported the interpreters who found a great quantity of symbolism in *Job*, stating categorically, "It is quite certain that the story of *Job*, as told in the Bible, if taken literally, would not have appealed to Blake at all. It is equally certain that he . . . interpreted it according to his own ideas." The symbolism professedly discovered in the engravings consists of the use of right and left for the spiritual and material, respectively, and is said to have been employed by Blake to extend to the hands and feet of his figures. The fact remains, however, that his illustrations are based on the literal events in *Job* and are highlighted with quotations from the Book interwoven as fragmentary texts in the decorative borders around the engravings; in varying strength of script these serve almost as a range of intonation, as though he had composed a surrounding choral intensification for the central pictures themselves. That he did not follow a strict sequence in selection of verses, but combined them from various chapters as they suggested themselves

as apposite, even including some from the New Testament, is apparent; and in several cases, the dissociation of the verses is not only reminiscent of a chorus or echo, but also of modern poetry in which the effect is often gained by the contrast of apparently discrete and not fully quoted or completed lines.

The forty-two chapters of the *Book of Job* were illustrated with exactly half that number of engravings by Blake.

They represent the final mastery of his technique and their interest is manifold. First, they present in their simplicity, absence of drapery and accessories, an interpretation that appears quite without the stamp of the classical or Renaissance,⁵ and yet equally without the imprint of the day, that is, wholly born of the imagination. Secondly, they are un-English in the solid handling

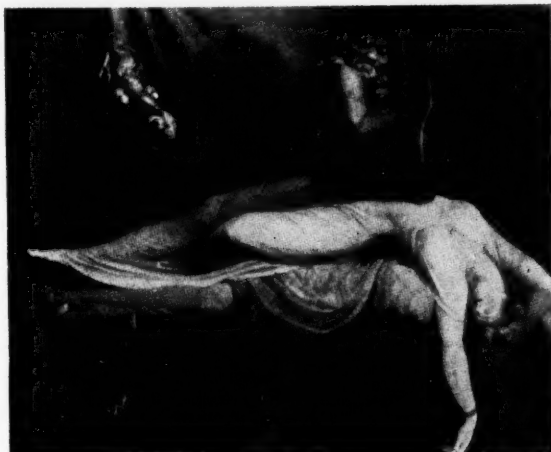


Fig. 2.—Henry Fuseli: "The Nightmare" (Second Version).

² Blake's *Poetical Works*, ed. by J. Sampson, Oxford, 1905, nos. CX and CI.

⁴ Accession number L.2100.48-20—a gift to the Museum Associates.

⁵ This is not to say that a kinship with the sweetness and exaltation of Fra Angelico is not discernable in Blake's angels, or an echo of Orcagna not found in his composition.



Fig. 3—William Blake (1757-1827): "Thy Sons & thy Daughters were eating & drinking Wine . . ." (Illustrations of the Book of Job)
(Gift of Miss Bella Mabury)

of the human nude which had been heretofore rejected by the national art. Thirdly, their approximation to the eternity of the original story is completely successful in attaining a stripped setting which is at once overwhelmingly modern and timeless. Blake's work, however it assimilated Michelangelo, Raphael,⁶ Duvet and neo-classicism, emerged, whether as a condition of a basic amateurishness or the shaping power of his own individuality, as distinct and spiritual as though entirely un-

touched by other forces. He endeavored to abstract the significance of the story which was symbolical for all time, and thus used as barren a background as possible (Fig. 5) and transcendent imagery (Fig. 6) to avoid the temporal and identifiable. With as

⁶Long after the Baroque had welded together the divided representation of heaven and earth in the paintings of the Renaissance, Blake reverted to the earlier technique, carefully and distinctly separating the celestial scene from the terrestrial, an influence of Raphael and Dürer. Yet in a few of the plates, the interaction of divine and human is maintained, as in nos. 13 and 17.

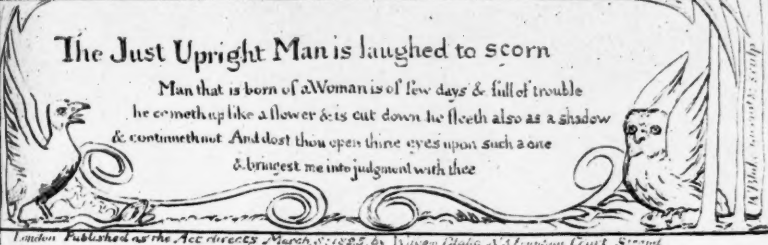
But he knoweth the way that I take
when he hath tried me I shall come forth like gold
Have pity upon me: Have pity upon me. O ye my friends
for the hand of God hath touched me

Though he slay me yet will I trust in him



The Just Upright Man is laughed to scorn

Man that is born of a Woman is of few days & full of trouble
he cometh up like a flower & is cut down he fleeth also as a shadow
& continueth not And dost thou open thine eyes upon such a one
& bringest me into judgment with thee



W. Blake, engraver, sculp.

Fig. 4—William Blake (1757-1827): "The Just Upright Man is laughed to scorn . . ."
(Illustrations of the Book of Job)

(Gift of Miss Bella Mabury)

little interest as Michelangelo in landscape, without the compulsion to clothe the Biblical figures in the garb of the day, Blake was able to make something of a return to the simplicity and directness of the earliest Christian illustrations and produce a genuinely spiritual art when that animating impulse was no longer informing the art of his century. Like Rembrandt before him, he drew heavily from the

Old Testament, and "brooding", as Roger Fry has said, "on the vague and tremendous images of Hebrew and Chaldean poetry, he arrived at such an indifference to the actual material world, at such an intimate perception of the elemental forces which sway the spirit with immortal hopes and infinite terrors when it is most withdrawn from its bodily conditions, that what was given to his in-

Lo, let that night be solitary
& let no joyful voice come therein.



Let the Day perish wherein I was Born

And they sat down with him upon the ground seven days & seven
nights & none spake a word unto him for they saw that his grief
was very great

Fig. 5—William Blake (1757-1827): "Let the Day perish wherein I was Born . . ."
(Illustrations of the Book of Job)
(Gift of Miss Bella Mabury)

ternal vision became incomparably more definite, more precisely and more clearly articulated, than anything presented to his senses."

The medium of *Job* is engraving and stipple. With long, firm, parallel strokes which delineate the nude as though it were almost encased by a sheath of lines, Blake left comparatively little unengraved to convey the actuality of flesh. Stipple,

a combination of etching and engraving to render tone by dots and flicks, he employed more sparingly. In the majority of the plates, detail was held down to a minimum and soberness stressed by the regularity of the line-work and austerity of the landscape, although always with a rich tonality. In the contrasts of light, Ruskin accorded Blake higher rank than Rembrandt, a judgment not to be read

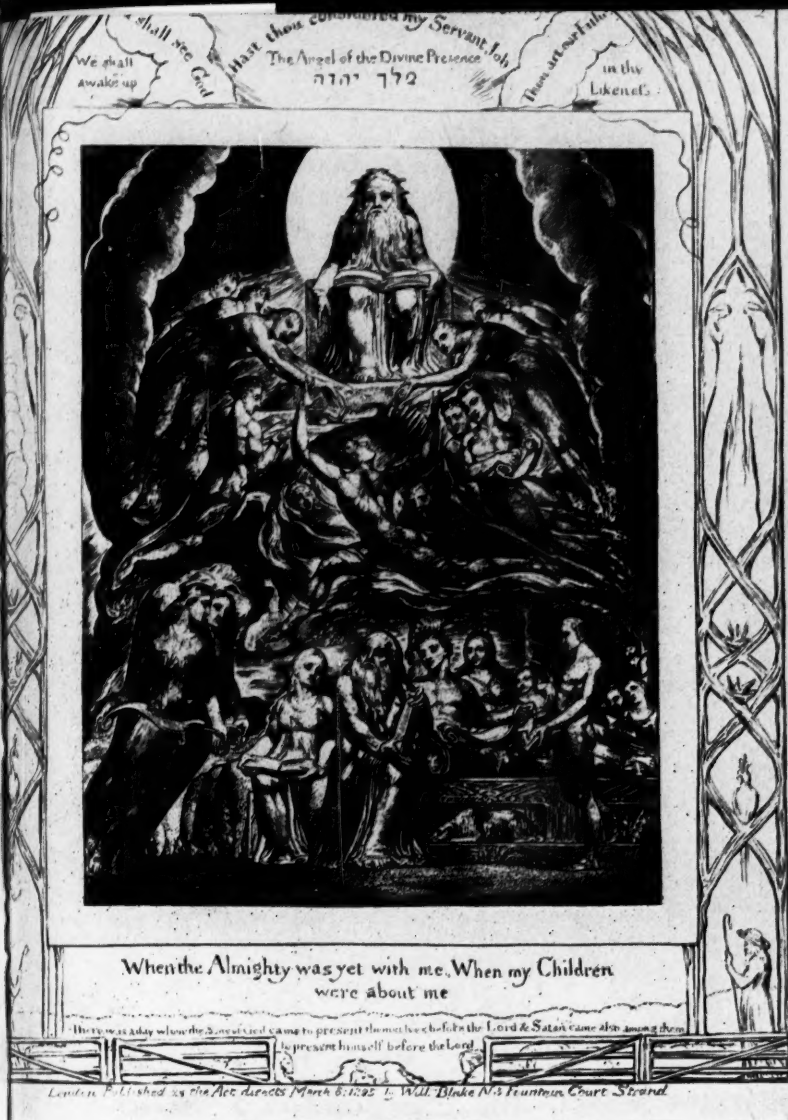


Fig. 6.—William Blake (1757-1827): "When the Almighty was yet with me . . ."
(Illustrations of the Book of Job)
(Gift of Miss Bella Mabury)

as entirely without prejudice, but significant only in that it was made at all, for it shows thereby the striking effect of Blake's light, although wholly dissimilar to Rembrandt's whose depth of chiaroscuro would have been a falsification to him. He wrote, ". . . all the copies, or pretended copies of nature, from Rembrandt to Reynolds, prove that nature becomes to its victim nothing but blots and

blurs." Living in continual commerce with visions, spirits, directions from imaginary presences, his conceptions of them were as clear-cut as if they were matters of every-day experience. There was nothing romantic or atmospheric about Blake's illumination; nothing was further from him than the brooding tenderness which is felt in the bulk of Rembrandt's etchings. Instead, his nature and art

were close to the evangelical and apocalyptic; witness the choice of the *Book of Job*, a spiritual lesson-book in which man is tried and tested to the most unendurable depth of his being. Many interpretations and conclusions have been drawn through the centuries from this mighty work, that it is a study of the inner struggle of man, that it is a revelation of the true vision of God, that it is an argument to quell skepticism, especially that which arises as the result of the triumph of the shrewd and strong over the pure and good. But whatever the interpretation, it is the awe-inspiring, formidable,

absolute and inescapable power of the controlling Law, as personified in the Biblical God, which permeates the *Book of Job*, and which appealed to Blake who strongly felt the pervasion of a spiritual dimension throughout nature which was the true measure and force of existence. And it is this direct conviction, this persuaded belief in the ineluctable Deity's supreme power and the corresponding helplessness of man, which comes out in this rare combination of pictorial imagination and rich textural line.

—EBRIA FEINBLATT

ERRATA

The Annunciation by Andrea della Robbia, incorrectly accredited in the last issue* to Mr. Hearst himself, was instead a gift of the Hearst Foundation Fund. The headpiece on p.3 of the same issue lost its caption, and should be identified as *A Triumphal Procession*, from the workshop of Paolo Uccello (1397-1475). This was a gift of William Randolph Hearst.

*Spring, 1948—Front Cover and pp.3-7.



Views of the new 18th Century French gallery
(Collections given by Hearst Magazines, Inc.)



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